Thomasville, Then and Now

By Frances H. Paulette

The people of Appomattox County are indeed proud of our local plant of Thomasville Furniture Industries. Employing nearly 900 employees and covering approximately 20 acres, the Appomattox plant is the largest in the company. It began operations here in 1974.

The Appomattox plant speaks for itself now, but lets take a look at Thomasville THEN......

In 1904, with a $10,000 capital investment, Thomasville Chair Company began operations out of a two-story frame building on the site of what is now Plant A in Thomasville. With about sixty employees the company produced some 180 chairs per day.

Any household would have been proud to own the chairs manufactured by the Thomasville Chair Company. The best part of all was that they were offered at an affordable price. They ranged from $8.00 to $21.00......per dozen!

Thomasville Chair Company, being the kind of people they were, wanted to 'do right' by the customer and put in a little something extra. They made it a policy to throw in a 13th. chair, making it "Bakers Dozen."

By 1908 Thomasville showed a profit on annual sales of $91,523. Like "Topsy", the company 'just grew and grew!'

In 1925, with 4 manufacturing plants in Thomasville, the company was incorporated.

Perhaps the boldest move was made in 1927 when Thomasville became the first American furniture firm to make its own complete line of dining room furniture and then in 1928 the company introduced its own line of bedroom furniture.

When T. Austin Finch became Thomasville president in 1929, it wasn't just a chair company anymore.

Along came the 30's and for those of you who remember, these were hard years, depression years. Times were, without a doubt, tough but to Thomasville, this era presented new challenges. Most furniture manufacturers were cutting wages drastically in order to keep running and to reduce costs. Thomasville did things a little differently; by holding wages firm and asking employees to step up production and to help reduce waste in order to offset the lower wages being paid by competitors.

A great many people had to 'cut corners' back in those depression years and other furniture companies elected to do the same thing. Therefore the market became flooded with substandard goods. Thomasville followed an opposite path and actually upgraded its product line during the 1930's, giving the company an entry to better stores in major cities.

With this new marketing direction in mind, Thomasville began a major modernization program to improve its plants. It was a giant risk during the depression years, but it paid off. And as the economy recovered, Thomasville was able to move forward while most other companies were standing still.

World War II meant changes for everybody and Thomasville was no exception. It meant conversion to production for the government. About 65% of Thomasville's output was directed toward products needed by the armed forces, such as bunk beds, tent stakes, rolling pins, spatulas, plywood for airplanes and even a special victory desk. Women went to work in the factories.

T. Austin Finch died in 1943 and his brother, Doak Finch succeeded him as company president. The company welcomed the peacetime.

Along came the 60's and this represented a period of rapid growth for Thomasville. In 1961, Thomasville merged with B. F. Huntley of Winston-Salem, so the name of the company was officially changed to Thomasville Furniture Industries, to more appropriately reflect the expanded product line.

Tom A. Finch, son of T. Austin Finch became president in 1961. He represented the third generation of the Finch family to serve in the presidency, having joined the company in 1946. It was under his leadership and guidance that the company developed into a major corporation.

Thomasville Furniture became a publicly owned company in 1962 and was listed on the New York Stock Exchange in 1964. A number of North Carolina firms were added to the Thomasville family in the 1960's: Phenix Chair Company of West Jefferson, Founders Furniture Company of Pleasant Garden; Western Carolina Furniture Company of Hickory; and Caldwell Furniture Company, with operations in Lenoir and Sawmills, In 1966 a new plant was built in Fayette, Miss. Then in 1968 Thomasville merged with Armstrong Cork Company of Lancaster, Pa.

During the 1970's new plants were opened in Appomattox and Brookneal. Earlier this year Tom A. Finch became chairman of the board and was succeeded as president by L. E. Bish, a former vice president. A third member of the senior management staff is L. E. Foster, executive vice president and general of the Armstrong Furniture Division.

Working together as a team to provide top quality and good value to the consumer is the aim of Thomasville Furniture Industries. For them that formula has worked for seventy-five years.

And that's the way it was, THEN, for Thomasville Furniture Industries; as you drive up 460 west and look to your left you see a huge, modern plant that is gradually inching its way across the Appomattox soil.....enlarging, improving, and growing.....making better furniture and making Appomattox a better place in which to live.

Employees from Thomasville Chair Company's Plant A posed for this photograph in 1909. Seems like they have all ages represented!

Thomasville Chair Company Office Employees in 1925.

USE THE TIMES-VIRGINIAN CLASSIFIED ADS

Winners in Ben Franklin Halloween Costume Contest

At the BEN FRANKLIN annual Halloween Costume Contest held on Wednesday evening at the store in Triangle Plaza there were witches, and goblins galore. Judges, Susan Bailey of ARMSTRONG FURNITURE INDUSTRIESand Frances Paulette of The Times-Virginian had a hard time making a choice as to who would be the winners in each category.

The following were chosen as winners: 5 Years and Under - 1st. Place, Meagan Gregor; 2nd Place, Brian Harrup; 3rd Place, Clarence Johns. In the 6-10 group the following winners were chosen: 1st. Place, John Hammer; 2nd Place, Mara Gregor; and 3rd Place, Jennifer White. In the 11 - 12 group the following were chosen: 1st Place, Lisa Campbell; 2nd Place, Lucy Christian; 3rd, Elizabeth Saunders; 13-15 Darryl Martin, first place winner; Ricky Mayberry, 2nd place; and Todd Nash, 3rd place winner. In the sixteen and up group Warren Mayberry received first place; Tammy Highfill, 2nd place; and Joanie Fleshman won third place.

Each of the winners took home a gift certificate from BEN FRANKLIN; guests and shoppers enjoyed "WITCHES BREW" (Cider) and Donuts, courtesy of BEN FRANKLIN.

ROCKS

It was quite rainy here on Friday. Big frost on Sunday morning.

Mr. Walter Shelton Sr. came home from the hospital last Monday.

Rev. W. H. Elder was called to Mt. Shiloh Church for the funeral of Mrs. Edward McQuarry on last Monday. She was 99.

A number attended the funeral of Willie Brown at Pamplin Methodist Church on Thursday morning. He died in South Boston on Tuesday morning. Sympathy is extended to the relatives.

The Budget Committee (Church Council) met to begin work on our 1980 budget on last Monday night at a dinner meeting at Maude's Restaurant at 6 p.m.

A Brotherhood Supper was held at Evergreen School in Evergreen for all men and families on Friday night. It was quite rainy but a good number came out.

The Friendship Circle will meet with Pearl Ranson on Tuesday afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

Mrs. Lockie Martin went to see an eye specialist in Lynchburg on Friday morning but was rushed to a hospital in Richmond that afternoon and will have surgery Saturday morning. Remember her in your prayers.

Sorry to hear Walter Shelton Sr. was rushed to Lynchburg General Hospital Sunday morning and is in Intensive Care there. We hope he will soon be improved. Bill Caldwell Jr. will go to Martinsville Sunday night to help bring his father home on Monday from the hospital.

Mr. and Mrs. Spud Almond and children spent the weekend at Va. Beach with Mr. and Mrs. Tommy Ranson and son and his mother, Zelia Ranson.

Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Richardson have moved in their new home.

Mrs. W. H. Elder, Patricia and Joanne and Cindy Roach rendered special music for the revival at Spring Creek Church on Thursday night.

Blass Ranson of Richmond was in the neighborhood last week.

Mrs. Lockie Martin had surgery at Richmond Eye Hospital in Richmond on Saturday morning. A speedy recovery is wished her.

G.A.S.'s will go to Evergreen for Foreign Mission study at 7:00 p.m. Monday, November 14th.

Thanksgiving supper at Rocks Church on November 21st at 6:30 p.m. Worship Service at 7:45.

Congratulations to Dorothy McFadden who won the birthday cake over W.T.T.X. on Saturday morning.

You missed a good sermon at Rocks on Sunday night.

Several will attend the World Day of Prayer at New Hope from 10:30 to 12:00, Monday Nov. 5th.

Mr. and Mrs. Willie Harvey are all smiles. It's a girl, 6lbs. Valerie Corrine, born at Virginia Baptist Hospital on November 3rd.

HERO Member For November

The Appomattox County High School HERO Member of the Month has been active in HERO by helping with all fund raising projects, being a guide for the 1978 Fall FHA-HERO FEDERATION CONFERENCE. She was secretary of the HERO Club in 1978-79, is vice president, chairperson of the hospitality and membership committees for the 1979-80 year and is the HERO Representative for the Campbell-Appomattox FHA-HERO Federation for 1979-80. She is now working on FHA-HERO State Degree. Our member of the month is Miss Helen Coleman, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Coleman.

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Thursday— 7 P.M. to 10:00 P.M.
Friday—7 P.M. to 10:00 P.M.
9 P.M. to 12:00 P.M.
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Ray Page was asking the other day whether there had been many reports of rats in fields. I said "no". He reports that in clipping two fields there was an unusually large number of rats moving about.

This is a good reminder that as cool weather approaches, it is time to set mouse traps or put a rodenticide out.

* * *

Several people are talking about adding some sheep to the farm business.There are so many places where a flock would fit nicely.

The Virginia Sheep Conference is scheduled for November 30 - December 1 at Natural Bridge. They have what I consider an outstanding program scheduled.

* * *

There are five new All-American selection of plants for 1980--flour flowers and one vegetable.

The vegetable is Gold Rush hybrid Squash. Flowers include: "Janie," a dwarf French Marigold, "Peter Pan Flame" is a hybrid zinnia, a new verbena is called "Sangria" and "Holiday Time" is an ornamental pepper.

When selecting varieties for next year try the All-American selections; they should be better.

* * *

The Tobacco Farmers Show is scheduled for November 14 - 16 at Greenville, N. C. It is billed as the largest indoor show in the Southeast.

A copy of the program brochure can be obtained from this office.

* * *

Hunting season starts next week, remember guns not only kill game, they kill people. Here are some gun safety reminders:

1. Treat every gun as being loaded.
2. Unload guns before bringing into vehicles, campers and homes.
3. Keep guns pointed away from people.
4. Carry the gun so it will point away from you and others if you should trip or fall.
5. Unload guns before climbing fences.
6. Identify your target before you shoot.

* * *

We've had calls about moisture levels in grain. For short storage you can live with 15%, but for long term storage 13% is a safe level.

Remember temperature drops 10°F per month in October and November. Stored grain temperatures should be reduced this much by aeration.

* * *

The Annual Membership Meeting of the Virginia Dark-Fired Tobacco Growers Marketing Association is Friday, November 16, 2:00 P.M., New Randolph Warehouse, Farmville. Sure hope you growers will support this meeting.

* * *

At the Lynchburg Calf Sale October 25, 617 steers averaged $88.40 and 411 heifers averaged $73.87.

* * *

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CVCC Math Contest

You have a bag with seven green socks, five red ones, and four blue ones. How many must you take from the bag to have a matched pair?

If you are a secondary school student who finds it easy to deal with such problems and if you go to school in Amherst County, Appomattox County, Bedford County, Campbell County, or Lynchburg, you'll be interested in a Mathematics Contest to be held at Central Virginia Community College on November 17.

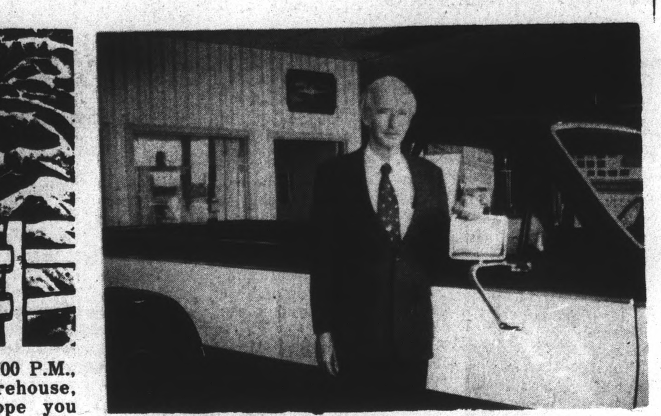
Sponsored locally by the Natural Science and Mathematics Division of CVCC, the statewide contest is held in cooperation with Virginia Comonwealth University. It offers students who are interested in mathematics an opportunity to participate in a challenging competition with other students from the 7th through the 12th grades--or the equivalent.

Participants will register from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. at CVCC on November 17; the contest will be administered from 9:00 to 11:00. Grading will take about a week, and winners will be notified to return to CVCC for an award ceremony. First and second prizes will be awarded to winners in the lower-level competition, and first through fourth prizes will be given to winners in the upper-level category.

If you found it easy to decide that you need to select four socks in order to have a matched pair and if you aren't among the approximately 200 students who have already registered, come to the College on Saturday the 17th and join us.

For further information, call the Divison of Natural Science and Mathematics at 239-0321, extension 328.

RUBBER STAMPS and Stamp Pads on sale at the Times-Virginian, Court Street, Phone 352-8215.



Page Petty Received Recognition

Ford Division of the Ford Motor Company has announced that Page Petty recently attained membership in the prestigious Ford Society of Professional Sales Counselors for 1979.

Membership in The Ford Sales Society can be attained only by those qualifying Ford salespersons who display outstanding achievement during the calendar year. Petty is currently employed with Lawson Ford, Inc. and has been a professional salesperson at that dealership since 1959. The Society of Professional Sales Counselors is a professional organization created by the Ford Motor Company to honor top automotive salespersons.

Mr. Petty and his wife, Betty, live with their three sons and one daughter at Red House.

Lawson Ford is indeed proud to have Page Petty as a member of their sales staff.

Attending National FFA Convention

The above memers of the Appomattox FFA Chapter met the bus Sunday morning for an exciting seven day trip to the National FFA Convention in Kansas City, Missouri. Dale Garrett, Ray Cheatham, Kevin Moore and Jimmy Burcher, Advisor, will be representing Appomattox this week at the convention as FFA members from across this nation gather to conduct business, compete in contests, and exchange ideas. The Appomattox delegation received the opportunity to attend by winning the State Crops Judging Contest held in Blacksburg this summer.

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HOLLYWOOD

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Mrs. Dan Menser, Mrs. Legrande Webb, Mrs. David Austin and Mrs. Raymond Franklin from Hollywood Church attended Women's World Day of prayer at New Hope Church Monday, Nov. 5th.

Mr. Shafter Drinkard returned home Saturday from the hospital. We wish him a very speedy recovery.

We were very sorry to hear of the death last week of Mrs. Hilda Abbitt Covington. Sincere sympathy is extended her family and love ones.

Mr. Robert Coleman was taken to the Lynchburg Hospital Wednesday. He will undergo surgery today (Monday). Our prayers are with him and his love ones.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Woodall and Lisa visited Mr. Walter Wingfield at Virginia Baptist Hospital and Mr. Kenneth Deaner at the Lynchburg General Hospital Friday.

Mrs. Della Ponton and a friend from Roanoke called in the homes of Mrs. Mary Bagby and Mrs. Iva Covington Thursday. Mrs. Ponton will undergo eye surgery Wednesday at Gill Memorial Hospital in Roanoke. We wish for her a safe and speedy recovery.

Visiting Mr. and Mrs. Monroe Webb and family Sunday and during the week were Mr. Ed Smith of Monroe. Rev. and Mrs. Dan Menser and Mike, Mrs. Billy Inge, Mr. and Mrs. Kemper Beasley, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Evans and Tracy, Rebecca Webb, Mr. and Mrs. Grover Beasley Jr., Mr. Joe Goin, Mr. H. W. Jenkins, Mr. and Mrs. Scott Sheets, Mr. John H. Webb, Mr. Mac Coleman, Mr. and Mrs. Legrande Webb, Miss Joyce Webb, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Franklin and Pam, Mr. Walker Webb, Mr. Richard Webb, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Webb, Deniese, Tony and Tim Webb, Mr. and Mrs. Willie Craft and Kristie and Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Goin and family.

Mrs. Vara Robertson of Lovingston spent several days with Mr. and Mrs. Richard Webb and family and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Morris visited other relatives. She and Mr. and Mrs. Webb visited Mrs. Billy Inge one evening.

Mrs. M. L. Covington and Mrs. Russell Conner were visitors of Mrs. Mary Bagby and Mrs. W. T. Covington Wednesday afternoon.

Mrs. Claude Hamlett of Hurt visited her mother, Mrs. Vergie Beasley Thursday at the Martin-Wooldridge Nursing Home.

The little folks really had a big time Trick or Treat Halloween. We older folks look forward to their coming.

We welcome Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kellam to our neighborhood.

The grandchildren and their families of the late Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Turnes met in the home of Mrs. Evie Shepherd Spranger of Buckingham Court House Sunday, Nov. 4th for a reunion. They enjoyed a very happy time together and lots of good food. Among others attending were Mrs. J. L. Torrence, Mrs. W. T. Covington, Mrs. H. G. Johnson, Mrs. Calvin Robinson, Mrs. Frank Hanenkrat, Mrs. James Carson, Mrs. Bill Conner, Mrs. James Conner, Darrel Conner, Mrs. Don Thornhill and Ronald Thornhill of Appomattox, Mr. and Mrs. James Bryandt and Mrs. Lorney Scrugg of Cullen.

Mrs. W. T. Covington spent the week-end with Mrs. J. L. Torrence, Mr. Garland Torrence of Hopewell and Mrs. James Richardson of Pamplin visited in this home Tuesday. Mr. and Mrs. Berk Drinkard, visited Mrs. Torrence Wednesday. Mrs. Robert Coleman spent Wednesday night in this home.

Mrs. David Repass and Mr. and Mrs. Kemper Beasley visited Mr. and Mrs. Richard Webb and family Sunday afternoon. Mrs. Vera Robertson was an overnight guest in this home Sunday.

Visiting Mr. and Mrs. L. H. Watson last week and Sunday were Mr. H. W. Jenkins, Mr. Alfred Almond and Mr. Walker Webb.

Mrs. Elliott Torrence spent Thursday morning with Mrs. W. T. Covington.

Calling in the home of Mrs. Mary Bagby during the Wee were Mrs. Audy Davis and Robin, Mrs. Shirley Franklin and Mr. Alfred Almond.

He Got His Goose!

Bryant Garris, twelve year old son of Mr. and Mrs. G. B. Garris of Appomattox proudly holds the first goose he ever bagged.

It was on the Eastern Shore on November 3 that Bryant downed the goose with a twelve-gauge shot gun. The goose had a 5 ft. 8 in. wing spread and was 2 ft. 8 in. long. Incidentally this was Bryant's first experience at goose-hunting.

Charles Torrence, local game warden. is shown with Bryant.

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